

Mrs. Glyn Outdoes Dostoevsky

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG has drawn four pictures on pages 1, 6, 23 and 260 of a book called *Family*. The rest of the book is by Elinor Glyn. These drawings are in Mr. Flagg's best genre. The first is *eroto-andante*. The second is *eroto-mystico*. The third is *eroto-tango*. The fourth is *religioso-stiletto*.

In the first picture Denzil "watches her with burning, longing eyes, waiting for her to speak.—Page 182." I turned to page 182 and got all flurried. "I love you! I love you! And she fiercely clasped her arms around his neck." I glyned along. "And your lover wants you," and Denzil wildly returned her fond caress." Carramba! I elinored down the page with visions of Thais, Salammbô and Carmen eating cancers of curiosity into my imag. "She had, indeed, forgotten that ghastly colossus in her absorption in their own two selves." I was puzzled, but the end of the page was in sight and I found that Amaryllis had "steadies" who had fallen at Mons and the Marne.

So I began to read the book (some reviewers do, oddly). *Family* has a subtitle, *The Awakening of Lady Ardayre*. This awoke reveries in me of *Lady Audley's Secret*, which every Philadelphian will remember was played for seventeen nights in concussion at Forepaugh's ten-twenty-third by George Learock and his incomparable company of inimitable Thespians. Great days! *The Awakening of Lady Ardayre*! The music of Swinburne is in that line. At-a-lan-ta in Cal-y-don—say it like that. What an improvement on *Three Weeks*! A title without lilt or litheness or lullaby.

The names of the inmates of this book, however, are superlatively poetic. Lend your tympanon a moment and get these:

Sir John Ardayre.
Amaryllis Ardayre.
Succubus.
Verisschenzko.
Harrietta Boleski.
Sweet Lady of My Soul.
Mum.

As you can imagine, there are enough names here for a great plot and seven undercurrents. The latter are interesting, for Mrs. Glyn has become so subtle and enigmatic in her style in late years that even Henry James, aided by his copy of Browning's *Sordello*, would have had difficulty in coaxing out the arcana of meaning from the mane of metaphors and the souse of similes. But it is not the story, after all, that is the thing in the books of Elinor Glyn. Tush! the Greeks said it all.

It is the prose that puts her in a class all by herself. Take the last line in the book: "So perish all spies!" Nothing ragged here. A simple, direct exclamation, with meaning as plain as a frankfurter. And patriotic. Take this on the first page: "She had lived in the country and was as good as gold." The most recognizable of all similes, as the virtue of A. A. is here compared to a very simple substance, although not now in circulation. Turn to the tragic thirteenth chapter, where the Fates are doing a marathon in the footsteps of these poor children of destiny—but why quote when we must tell something of this great story? I am not a jewel plucker, but a book liar.

It is this way: Sir John Ardayre went honeymooning in Paris with his lovely young bride, Amaryllis, and it is almost spoiled by the fear that he will die without an heir, in which case the family title and estates would go to a scoundrel who claims to be his half-brother. Prompted by a sense of duty to his family, Sir John, unknown to Amaryllis, adopts a daring, unconventional solution of the problem, aided by his cousin Denzil [see page 125],

and soon it is announced there will be an heir to the house of Ardayre.

This outline only hits the high spots. The book is chaste enough, although we counted seventeen different unsinkable lounges up to page 175 and the rug motif of *Three Weeks* bobs up again, which shows what great difficulty literary genius has in forsaking its early scenic obsessions. Harrietta got into jail in Chapter XXIII. (why do Russians always get into jail?) and here are scenes that Dostoevsky would have given his celebrated shirt to have written. D. wore this shirt, if you recall, for six years. Mrs. Glyn is going the way of us all—she is reading the Russians. It is the Riga-mortis of all sad literary souls.

We cannot tell you any more of the great things in this book, as it was made to be sold, and we never can understand why book reviewers are permitted to



The author of "Belgium," drawn by McCutcheon in Brussels.

"blow" the story in books. However, the climax is terrific—have you ever dropped a penny in the slot down'n Fourteenth street and heard the ravings of John McCullough? Have you ever heard Corse Payton act? Not a marker!

No wonder Chatterton committed suicide. He couldn't write like that!

FAMILY. By ELINOR GLYN. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.50.

"Labrador Days"

"WE will not kill you.
You are to pay—
Two white bears.
Twelve white foxes.
Three live dogs."

Sounds like one of our new poets in his more lucid moments, but is the Eskimo value set upon a really great man's life. We found it in *Labrador Days*, a new collection of short stories by Dr. Wilfred Grenfell gathered from the fishing folk among whom his work as medical missionary is conducted and told in the homely simplicity of their own vernacular. It is a variety of missionary work that Dr. Grenfell is doing in giving us these stories, though of a selfish sort. He

wishes, unless we are mistaken, to put an end to the million and one foolish questions that he has spent a large part of his life answering. In one of the sketches he refers to a nice, cheerful group visiting his hospital. "The ever recurrent questions had been asked and patiently answered—yes, the ice was cold, but not always wet; the glare of the snow was hard on the eyes; dogs do delight to bite; and so on."

Some of us have read enough to avoid these pitfalls, other books by Dr. Grenfell or some one else, or by good chance have met Captain Peary at a chafing dish party. Let the rest of us bear in mind such tragedies as this of Jake Newman of Rogers Cove, who left his own town after dinner to fetch a load of wood and was found three days after buried in snow, not two hundred yards from his front door, frozen to death. There are tales of heroism and romance which you must read and revelations of strange customs:

"The wedding was in true Labrador style. Every one from far and near was present, quite without the formality of an invitation. Every scrap of room was needed to accommodate the guests, and at night hardly an inch of floor space but lodged some sleeping form wrapped in a blanket, while the hardier ones with sleeping bags contentedly crawled into them out in the snow, as is their custom when nothing better offers."

No less amusing is the Eskimo's method of putting painful events out of mind. When a person dies he is never mentioned again, and if any one living in the vicinity happens to have the same name he incontinently changes it. "As a result," Dr. Grenfell adds, "confusion not infrequently arises, for a man whom you have known all his life as 'John' is 'William' the next time you meet him."

LABRADOR DAYS. By WILFRED T. GRENFELL. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$1.50.

Cricket's heart, like an appendix, seems to be atrophied from lack of use. Mother is too busy, father doesn't know how, and governesses and teachers are more concerned about her manners. So Cricket becomes a child of rebellion, playing pranks that one enjoys heartily, but with the feeling that Cricket herself doesn't. In time Cricket discovers her own heart. She doesn't know how big it is, until the biggest man in the world comes and fills it. *Net, \$1.50*

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